The Dark Side

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by 305unreal

Summary

Just after Will escapes jail time and is kicked out by his mother, his attorney, Robertus Lecter, brings him home, to the dismay of his wife, Lady Murasaki. Will meets their nephew, Hannibal, and other Baltimore teenagers who lead them to trouble.

At night on a dark street two youths – a boy and a girl – approach a car down an alley with graffiti on the walls. The teenagers are dressed in secondhand clothes at least a size larger than them. After spending a moment to appreciate the vehicle, the girl raises a crowbar to smash the window.

“I’m your big sister, Will. If I don’t teach you, who will?”

She has a good point. Bev’s dad is in prison, and Will’s dad is an abusive alcoholic. Their mom is constantly either drunk or strung out, so she doesn’t notice or care. Bev pops the trunk and Will moves to the storm drain to collect the wrapped-up body. Some drunk man was making unwanted advances on Bev but Will subdued him. The trunk, however, is used as a storage container and the body won’t fit, as Will relates to his sister. She hands him a fire axe sitting innocuously on the back floorboard.

While Bev hotwires the car, Will uses the axe to decapitate their victim. He tosses the axe and head into the trunk, sliding into the passenger seat when the car bursts to life. It’s thrilling, not just the justified killing, but the chase. They always race down the lanes with a body or body parts in the back of a stolen car, and it makes Will feel free. A police cruiser sitting off to the side spots them and turns on its siren and lights. Will and Bev hoot and holler as another car turns up to block their path.

“Hold on tight, bitch!”

Bev swerves to avoid it, and the chasing one crashes into its side. A third cruiser finds its way to the siblings, and Will’s eyes widen as he realizes they’re about to collide with the side of an abandoned fallout shelter. All he can do is lean into his seat and shut his eyes. He’s vaguely aware of Bev reaching her arm across his chest and the flashing lights before things fade to black.

In a juvenile delinquency center, Will is led by a guard through a hallway into a small room with a single table. A middle-aged man sits there, wearing a suit, his side of the table spread out in papers in files. There’s a mix of controlled enthusiasm and sincerity in the air, and it confuses Will. When the man catches Will’s eye, the guard takes the handcuffs off Will.

“Will,” he greets in an affable yet professional voice, “I'm Robertus Lecter. The court's appointed me your public defender.”

Will eyes him and sits down without responding or shaking his hand. Robertus takes his seat again and shrugs.

“You could do worse. You okay? They treating you alright?”

Avoiding eye contact, he snarls back, “Where’s my sister?”

Robertus flips through the files. “Beverly is 19. She stole a car, had a gun in her pants and an ounce of pot in her jacket, and she has a couple of priors. I'm guessing that right now Beverly is looking at 3 to 5 years. But Beverly's not my concern. You, on the other hand, are 16. This is your first time in lockup. I would assume you don't plan on coming back. Your grades are... not great, suspended twice for fighting, truancy three times, test scores…”

He trails off and looks at the boy who’s still avoiding eye contact. “98th percentile? On your SATs. Will, if you start going to classes… are you thinking about college?” When Will only snorts bitterly, Robertus presses on. “Have you given any thought at all to your future? Mister Graham, I am on your side. Help”

“Modern medicine is advancing to the point where the average human life span will be 100,” Will cuts him off monotonously. “But I read this article that said social security's supposed to run out by the year 2035, which means people are going to have to stay at their jobs until they're…” he pauses briefly to calculate in his head, “90. So, I don't want to commit to anything too soon.”

Robertus smiles thinly. “Look, I can plea this down to a misdemeanor. (Will looks at him) Petty fine, probation. But know this: stealing a car ‘cause your big sister told you to? It’s stupid, and it’s weak. Now, those are two things you can't afford to be anymore.”

Will rolls his eyes, and Robertus goes on to explain how he rose from poverty in Lithuania. His father was gone, and his mother worked all the time, but now he’s here. The boy gives

him an insincere half-grin from the life story, and Robertus tells him that he should have plans at his age. Dreams. Will finally looks him in the eye and growls.

“Yeah, right. Let me tell you something, okay? Where I'm from having a dream doesn't make you smart. Knowing it won't come true, that *does*.”

Later, Will is walked out by Robertus and a guard. He’s got Robertus’s card for a reminder on the hearing. An old clunker squeals around the corner, hopping the curb, as they part ways. Will’s mom, Anne, bounds out of the driver’s seat. Her ill-fitting sweater is hanging off of her shoulder, unintentionally showing off her latest bruises. Her hair is frazzled, and her voice is loud.

“What kinda family I got, huh? What the *hell* did I do to deserve this family? You want to tell me that? I ought to just let you rot. This is what I expect from your father. And now your sister’s been carted off? Let’s go, Will.”

She doesn’t touch him throughout her tirade, but she also pointedly climbs into the passenger seat. Will doesn’t spare his surroundings a second glance. He’s used to being looked down upon. He climbs into the driver’s seat and takes them home.

At the Graham residence, Anne pours herself a drink as Will stands across the room watching her. The house is sort of open concept so they're all in the same room but it's a kitchen and a living room, not a very big place. The furniture looks pretty mismatched and old. Anne’s current boyfriend, George, stirs from his TV when the program falls to a commercial. He doesn’t say much, but Will walks to his side when he beckons. The man grabs Will roughly by his hair and uses the leverage to twist him around, assessing the damage.

Will stands his ground and lets George yank him around like a ragdoll or a marionette. His other hand moves to Will’s throat, applying enough pressure to cut off the minimal air supply. Will knows from past attempts not to struggle. He’s also careful not to stare into his eyes, because last time, the pain and anger were too much. He passed out and woke extremely sore. When Will doesn’t fight back, George huffs. He smacks the boy across the face and shoves him to the ground.

He goes to his room to lie on the mattress. It isn’t really a room; it’s like a storage closet. A couple of hours later, Anne walks in, a new drink in her hand.

“I can't do this anymore, Will. I can't. I want you out of my house.”

Will stares back, flabbergasted. “Where am I going to go?”

“You heard your mother, man,” George calls out from behind her. “Get your stuff and get out.”

“This isn’t your house, *man*,” Will scowls.

“Why don't you worry about your own kids, George? Instead of freeloading off my mom?”

Anne turns away and lights a cigarette while her boyfriend and her youngest son engage in a physical fight. George throws the first punch, cutting Will’s upper lip, but he’s not one to back down from a fight. He tackles George over a table, and the fight escalates until George tosses Will through the back screen door. The teenager’s forehead is bleeding, matting in his curls. He’s got an oncoming shiner and strangulation marks around his neck, and those are just the more prominent features.

He leaves George with a broken nose and a busted jaw as he nabs his backpack and bicycle. He just starts pedaling, knowing that he needs to get somewhere, anywhere but Wolff Trapp, Virginia. He follows the train tracks and uses a payphone on the side of a busy street to make a number of calls to members of the gang. Although he’s helped kill and steal for them, he’s just considered as Bev’s little brother. With each call, he grows more and more frustrated. He’s about to just hijack a car when he finds Robertus’s rumpled business card and makes a last-ditch effort.

It works, and the attorney comes by to pick him up. They load Will’s bike in the trunk of a very expensive black car, and they drive in silence – past the dull, lower-class, along the coast, into upper-class Baltimore. Will offhandedly comments on the car, though he knows from earlier, stating in Robertus’s eyes, that his wife makes the money in the family. By the time they drive through a guard station at the front of a gated community, it’s dark out. They pull into the driveway of an enormous and very beautiful house.

“Why don't you wait here for a minute? I'll be back.”

He automatically pulls out the keys and sort of looks like he's trying to decide whether or not to take them.

Will rolls his eyes but doesn't look at him. "It's no fun if the keys are in the car."

Robertus puts the key back in the ignition and gets out. Will waits in the car until he can no longer see him. He steps out and lights a cigarette, content to explore for now.

"Who are you?" A girl speaks up from the next driveway over.

"Whoever," he shrugs.

She nods, "Can I bum a cigarette?"

Will walks over to her, gives her a cigarette, and then offers his lit one to her rather than his lighter. She leans close and puffs her cigarette against his. She smiles at him, but he backs away to where he was standing before.

"So, what are you *seriously* doing here?"

"Seriously?" He raises an eyebrow and takes a drag from the cigarette. "Killed a guy, stole a car, sister crashed it, she went to jail, mom kicked me out, and Mr. Lecter took me in."

"Cousin from Brooklyn, then?"

"Sure."

Robertus walks up behind Will, and Bedelia drops her cigarette.

"Hey, Mr. Lecter. I was just meeting your new nephew."

He looks confused for a moment and then claps Will on the back, letting his arm fall to the side when the boy immediately inches away from contact.

“Oh, yes, all the way from Seattle.”

“Seattle?” Bedelia asks with a smirk.

“Dad’s in Seattle,” Will plays along. “Mom’s in Brooklyn.”

Robertus clears his throat and brings up Bedelia’s fashion show fundraiser tomorrow night. They talk shortly while Will backs away from the conversation and focuses on the nicotine. Eventually, a car pulls up for Bedelia, and Robertus returns to Will.

“You just got invited to a fashion show.” When Will doesn’t respond, Robertus swings his arms. “Let’s go inside. There’s, uh, no smoking in this house.”

Will drops his cigarette and continues up the driveway. Robertus quickly runs back and stamps it out. They walk straight through the main house, Robertus showing the main rooms – living, dining, kitchen – and walking out into the backyard. They go into the pool house where Lady Murasaki and Chiyoh are. The pool house is looks more like a living room than a storage area. It's furnished and has light wood floors, and the walls are all floor-length windows.

“This is where you're going to be staying. And this is the Queen of the manor herself, my wife Lady Murasaki.”

She speaks with a forced friendliness that Will’s mimicked in the past. “Hello, Will. Welcome to our home. If you need anything, Chiyoh here can help you.”

“Thank you,” he copies her syntax and turns to the handmaiden. “Thanks very much.”

Robertus tells him to make himself comfortable, and they leave Will in the pool house. He quickly locates a small washroom and takes a shower. He pulls out another cigarette to smoke and climbs up on the roof to watch the stars.

In the morning, Will comes out of the pool house, blinking in the bright sunlight. He gets a better look around. There's a big pool, and a gorgeous view of the green hillside, with the city beyond and the ocean the other way. Will enters the main house and finds a teenage boy

sitting cross-legged on the floor, reading a novel. Will initially ignores him post a brief moment of eye contact.

The other boy's eyes are darkened akin to Bev's, and Will knows there's something he hides below a few layers. Will goes into the kitchen to fix a small bowl of cereal. When he walks back into the living room, the boy is holding out a similar novel.

"Would you like a read?"

Will shrugs, but he settles on the floor next to him. A small smile forms across Will's lips as the content silence fills the room. He's never been an average kid but eating cereal while reading novels is a nice way to spend a morning. The older boy finishes his novel and looks over to see that Will has been speed-reading.

"I have other books of this nature."

Will bobs his head in consideration, but the conversation stops there. Robertus comes in carrying groceries.

"I see you two have met. Hannibal, what are you doing inside on this beautiful day? Why don't you show Will around?"

"Yes, because there is so much to do," Hannibal replies, deadpan. However, his sarcasm doesn't stop him from looking at Will. "Is there something you would like to do?"

"What do you do in Baltimore?"

Hannibal leads Will to Prettyboy Reservoir, where he's got a catamaran sitting on the water. It features a rainbow-colored sail and the name *Blooming Breeze* painted on the side. Will watches as Hannibal pulls ropes to adjust the sails with familiarity.

"I had a plan to hit the high seas and sail to Tahiti. Complete solitude."

"Sounds nice," Will smiles slightly. "I'd like that. And fishing."

Hannibal hums. “I like the idea of sailing, but I admit I’m not much of a fisher. Once upon a time, Alana would be my fisher.”

“Alana?”

“The girl the boat’s named after,” he explains. “Alana Bloom. I had quite the crush on her.”

“Had?”

“My inclinations now lie elsewhere.”

Will hums and lies contently on the boat next to him. A few hours later, they bring the boat back to shore. Hannibal is rolling up the sails when Robertus joins them.

“Hey, fellas. I thought we'd head over to the fashion show at about 7.”

Hannibal looks pained at his uncle. “I hardly think Will wants to spend time at the fundraiser. Every day is a fashion show for these people.”

Robertus frowns. “Will *is* going. Bedelia invited him.”

Hannibal raises an impressed eyebrow. “What did you do to garner her attention?”

“Gave her a cigarette,” he shrugs. “Told her I killed a guy.”

He pretends not to notice the glances shared between uncle and nephew, and everyone agrees to meet at 7. Another few hours later, in Will stands in front of a mirror and tries unsuccessfully to tie his tie. Hannibal let him borrow a nice suit for the event, but Will has never needed something this nice before. He finally gives up and pulls on his suit jacket.

When he meets Hannibal in the driveway, he comments on the lack of tie.

“Not going to wear one. Open collar: it’s a good look.”

Hannibal smiles a little. He reaches over and adjusts Will’s collar. Though he stills for a moment, he doesn’t flinch away.

“I don’t disagree.”

At the fashion show, well-dressed people mingle outside. Will, Hannibal, Robertus, Lady Murasaki, and Chiyoh arrive. A waiter offers hors d'oeuvres to Will.

“Mushroom leek crescent? Crab and brie phyllo?”

Will just looks but doesn't touch the food on the tray, and Hannibal leans in close.

“Welcome to the dark side.”

He smiles despite himself and decides this won’t be too bad if he just sticks by Hannibal. A few women gather around like crows fighting over the early worm. He shies away from their touches, keeping to Hannibal’s side. They obtain seven and sevens at the bar, igniting a genuine smile from Will as Hannibal tries the drink for the first time.

Off to the side of the fashion show, Hannibal nurses his seven and seven, and he nods to his former best friend, Tobias. The latter catches his gaze and narrows his eyes.

“The fuck you looking at, queer?”

Rather than rise to the bait, Hannibal sips and speaks in a conversational tone, “My vacation was great, too. Thank you for asking about it.”

Tobias scoffs and turns to walk away. He literally bumps into Will, who holds his ground and stares at him. Tobias walks away. Will returns to Hannibal’s side but doesn’t say a word. They silently walk to the bar for more drinks, and then to a table in the back. Onstage, Bedelia steps up to the microphone, and people clap.

“Thank you, thank you. Thank you all so much for coming. Every year we put on a fashion show to raise money for the battered woman's shelter. It's such a good cause, you guys and we couldn't do any of it without your support and the support of Fashion Island and all their great stores. All right, enjoy the show!”

Everyone applauds as the first model comes out, and Hannibal leans over to whisper to Will.

“That’s Alana.”

Will hums thoughtfully and takes a sip of his drink. Bedelia walks down the runway, and Tobias claps for her, but she looks only at Will who’s instead watching Hannibal. Eventually, the show comes to an end, and Will walks down the steps. Alana is quick to catch up to him, inviting him to a party.

“Well, Frederick – that’s my friend – has the beach house to himself. Like as a gift ‘cause of all the hard work we’ve done for charity.” Her voice turns flirty when she adds, “If you need a ride or like, directions or something, I’m Alana.”

She runs back to her group of friends, and Will reiterates her words to Hannibal. Will mostly just needs to be around people. He doesn’t want to flirt or party really, but he just *needs* to be around people. Hannibal seems to sense it, and he follows Will onto the topless party jeep. The beach house is a party inside and out. There's a table full of bongs and someone snorts drugs off the table. A guy dancing puts his hand under a girl's shirt, and another girl dancing takes off her dress as Will and Hannibal walk in.

Will whispers slyly to Hannibal, “Welcome to the dark side.”

Will weaves through the crowd, and Hannibal is on his heels. He’s less than impressed by the drug table, but he accepts a Red Solo cup that Will hands him. It’s a punch mix with vodka being the prevalent ingredient. They stand off to the side, and Will allows his mind to blanket behind all the noise and anarchy. He doesn’t need to think when chaos drowns out his thoughts. Hannibal plasters on a false smile to others and, when he checks a random door, he’s a little surprised to find a threesome bubble bath going on.

Will ventures into the backyard, stripping down to a wifebeater but keeping his dress pants on. Hannibal allows Will to remove his dress jacket as Bedelia walks up to them.

“Boys,” she nods in greeting, raising her cup.

Will and Hannibal copy her and take a sip. She’s still dressed from the fashion show, and she smiles quickly at Hannibal before turning her gaze to Will.

“What do you think of Baltimore?”

“I think I can get in less trouble where I'm from.”

“You have no idea,” she smirks as she walks away.

A while into the party, Will and Hannibal have secluded themselves on the back steps of the garage. Alana drunkenly wanders over to them, spilling her drink on Will.

“Hi-i-i-I,” she hiccups. “I’m wasted. What’s your name again?”

“Will,” he answers without gnashing his teeth.

She starts to wrap her arms around his neck, but he’s reached his limit. He shrugs her off and backs away. She tries to follow him, but he hands off the remnants of his drink and walks away.

Can’t do this. It’s too fucking much. Why the hell did I say yes? I don’t do parties, and this is why. But I couldn’t be alone. But wouldn’t I be with Hannibal anyway at the house? Or would we separate between house and pool house? What the fuck is wrong with me? I don’t fit in with any

“Will.”

Hannibal has a hand on his shoulder, forcing him to look up. Will struggles not to shove him away, looking up with glossy eyes hiding behind tears that threaten to fall. He’s walked near a dying-out firepit, and Tobias shows up with two of his friends: Jack and Mason.

“Aww, the queers are crying,” Jack taunts them.

“Do we have a problem?” Hannibal asks lowly.

“You tell me,” Tobias replies as Mason suddenly kicks the back of his legs.

Hannibal loses his grip on Will, and both boys crumple. Will fights back just as fast. Several other guys join in, playing on Jack’s side like he’s Team Leader. Mason kicks Will in the

groin.

“Welcome to Baltimore, bitch.”

Will lets Mason walk away with his crew, and Hannibal is more focused on his well-being than revenge on the other boys.

“Will you be alright?”

Will nods slowly. “Do you know where Mason lives?”

As it happens, Hannibal’s the best guy to go to; he knows where they all live. The boys return to the pool house looking beat up and tired. A jeep loudly pulls up next door, and two giggling girls – Will can make out that one is Alana – carry a passed-out Bedelia to the front steps and leave her there. Will hums and nudges Hannibal.

“Help me carry her.”

Hannibal, Will learns, is very strong. He carries Bedelia with no issue. He brings her to Will’s bed in the pool house and drapes a blanket on her. He’s dimly aware of Will leaving, but he wakes when Will later joins him on the palate on the floor.

When the boys truly wake in the morning, Bedelia is gone, and Will is wrapped in Hannibal’s arms in the cushions on the floor. Lady Murasaki enters the pool house, sounding an odd mix of anger and relief. The Vergers’ house burned down overnight, and she’d immediately thought of the boys.

“What happened to your faces?”

“We got into a fight,” Hannibal responds.

“With some douches,” Will adds sleepily, snuggling into the warmth.

“We held our own,” Hannibal finishes, lightly squeezing his new friend.

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